

## *Russell's 1913*

### **Theory of Knowledge *Manuscript***

#### I

Russell's *Theory of Knowledge*<sup>1</sup> represents an important stage in the development of his philosophy, and it also throws a lot of light on Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. I published an article about this in 1977,<sup>2</sup> but I want to add to it now, and especially to the account that I gave then of the place of the manuscript in Russell's oeuvre.

First, a few words are needed about the history of the manuscript. Russell wrote it in the spring of 1913. Wittgenstein read it, met Russell, and severely criticized it in May of that year. Russell then published the first six chapters as articles in *The Monist* in 1914 and 1915. Of these articles the best known are those reprinted by R.C. Marsh under the title "On the Nature of Acquaintance," in the Russell anthology that he edited in 1956, *Logic and Knowledge*.<sup>3</sup> Russell never published the rest of the manuscript, and the question why he refrained is interesting.

There is a letter written by him to Ottoline Morrell in 1913 that provides a partial answer to this question. He describes his meeting with Wittgenstein:

We were both cross from the heat. I showed him a crucial part of what I had been writing. He said it was all wrong, not realizing the difficulties—that he had tried my view and knew it wouldn't work. I couldn't understand his objection—in fact he was very inarticulate—but I feel in my bones that he must be right, and that he has seen something that I have missed. If I could see it too I shouldn't mind, but as it is, it is worrying, and has rather destroyed the pleasure in my writing—I can only go on with what I see, and yet I feel it is probably all wrong and that Wittgenstein will think me a dishonest scoundrel for going on with it. Well, well—it is the younger generation knocking at the door—I must make room for him when I can, or I shall become an incubus. But at the moment I was rather cross.<sup>4</sup>

It is a ready conjecture that Russell refrained from publishing the parts of the manuscript that Wittgenstein criticized. There is a lot of evidence supporting this,

but I shall only mention five points. First, we know that Russell had hoped that his manuscript would be the beginning of a long collaboration with Wittgenstein, who a few months later gave him his *Notes on Logic*, a work which he, Russell, rearranged for him.<sup>5</sup> Second, the first of the unpublished chapters of Russell's manuscript is "On the Acquaintance Involved in Our Knowledge of Relations," and at that time Wittgenstein held that relations are not objects but forms.<sup>6</sup> Third, most of Russell's subsequent chapters are concerned directly or indirectly with propositions and the understanding of propositions, and there is ample evidence that Wittgenstein rejected Russell's distinctive ideas on these topics. For example, in a letter to Russell dated July 2, 1913, he writes, "I am very sorry to hear that my objection to your theory of judgement paralyzes you,"<sup>7</sup> which suggests that Russell must have said (or written) that he could not answer the criticism or go on without answering it. There is also a clear reference in Wittgenstein's *Notebooks, 1914-16*<sup>8</sup> to his own earlier attempt to develop a theory of propositions like the one put forward by Russell in his manuscript, and this explains something in Russell's letter to Ottoline Morrell, namely, "He said . . . that he had tried my view and knew it wouldn't work." Fourth, the picture theory of propositions is, in large part, a reaction against Russell's 1913 theory.<sup>9</sup> Fifth, Russell's next major work, *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism*, contains conscious but incomplete moves away from his 1913 doctrines about qualities and relations and about propositional forms in the direction in which he believed Wittgenstein to have gone.<sup>10</sup>

It is highly probable that Wittgenstein's unanswered criticisms explain why Russell did not publish the second half of his manuscript. However, care is needed in specifying exactly what needs to be explained. The whole edifice of *Theory of Knowledge* is founded on Russell's doctrine of acquaintance, which he abandoned in 1919.<sup>11</sup> So after 1919 it is unnecessary to seek another explanation of nonpublication. The most that we can say about nonpublication after that date is that it was overdetermined. But how much was the other factor, Wittgenstein's unanswered criticism, operating during the preceding six years? Russell had to publish the first part first, and as the war continued he became increasingly preoccupied with pacifism. However, an examination of the contents of the manuscript will establish that Wittgenstein's unanswered criticism certainly gave Russell a sufficient reason not to publish the second part.

I shall begin with a general description of the contents of *Theory of Knowledge*. It deals with the epistemic basis of Russell's theory of language. The table of contents shows that he intended to cover the theory of logic too, but, though there are interesting remarks about logic in the text, there is no systematic treatment of it. The question that concerns him is, what sort of knowledge and what kinds of thought processes are sufficient for understanding contingent propositions and, if they are sense-datum propositions, for establishing their truth. His answer is that acquaintance takes us nearly all the way to both achievements.

He had given acquaintance a lot to do in *The Problems of Philosophy*, and arguably he had overworked it even there, but he goes further in *Theory of Knowledge*. There is in the later work a new explanation of the transition from acquaintance with the constituents of a proposition to understanding the proposition itself. This, of course, is a difficult transition to explain, as Wittgenstein must often have reminded him. Acquaintance always relates a subject to a single fixed object. So how can it be adapted to explain the relation to the shifting basis in the world that may make a proposition true or may make it false? Russell's answer was to introduce a new kind of acquaintance, acquaintance with forms. There is also another move that is difficult to explain, the move from acquaintance with a complex to apprehension of a truth about it. However, in *Theory of Knowledge* he does not add anything new to his earlier account of this move. He merely develops it in more detail.

The detailed examination of the contents of the manuscript, which now follows, falls into four sections. First, I shall briefly recapitulate the chapters that Russell published in *The Monist* in 1914 and 1915. Then I shall take a quick look at his treatment of acquaintance with predicates and relations in the first two chapters that he did not publish. The third section will deal with his account of understanding propositions and the fourth with his account of the apprehension of truths about sensed complexes. The third section will be the longest because it is concerned with the most difficult problem that Russell faced in the manuscript. I am, of course, forced by lack of space to omit certain topics, some of them important. The plan of my exposition is to follow Russell's attempt to push acquaintance as far as possible toward a solution of his two most difficult problems, and then to inquire what he thought was needed to solve them completely. This ought to yield a fairly clear picture of the relations between the ideas that he puts forward in the manuscript and his own earlier and later ideas.

## II

In the chapters published by Russell in *The Monist* and reprinted as "On the Nature of Acquaintance" in *Logic and Knowledge* (1956), he defines acquaintance as an extensional relation between subject and object, argues for its existence against William James and other adversaries, and demonstrates its importance in cases in which the object is a particular. In the chapters published by him in *The Monist* but not reprinted, he deals with three kinds of acquaintance with particulars: sensation, memory, and imagination. In his own summary, in the unpublished part of the manuscripts, he writes: "These, we found, though their objects are usually somewhat different, are not essentially distinguished by their objects, but by the relations of subject and object. In sensation subject and object are simultaneous; in memory the subject is later than the object; while imagination does not essentially involve any time-relation of subject and object, though all time-relations are compatible with it."<sup>12</sup>

There are only two points that I want to make about this. First, the particular that is the object of acquaintance may be simple or complex, and this is especially important in the case of sensation. Second, Russell consistently held that acquaintance is an extensional relation not involving any knowledge of truths about its object. He concedes that it is usually accompanied by such knowledge, but holds that it never actually involves it.<sup>13</sup> It is surprising, but undeniable, that he maintains this thesis even about acquaintance with complex particulars.

Since this interpretation is important, it is worth pausing to deal with an objection to it. There are two passages in Russell's writings in which he says that acquaintance with the so-and-so requires not only acquaintance with *a* where *a* is in fact the so-and-so, but also knowledge that *a* is the so-and-so.<sup>14</sup> This might suggest the objection that in certain cases he believed acquaintance to be intensional.

However, the two passages do not really give this inference any support. For there is no reason to suppose that Russell takes the subject's original acquaintance with *a* to be intensional in the cases that he describes. The distinctive feature of his cases is that the subject has to achieve something more, either at the time or later, in order that, later still, a commentator may specify his acquaintance in a certain way, viz., as acquaintance with the so-and-so. We have to suppose that this commentator is asked, "Is the subject acquainted with the so-and-so?" Now one answer that he might give is, "He is, but he does not know that he is." That answer would be the one that we would expect Russell to allow in the light of everything else that he says about acquaintance; but in these two passages he imposes a special convention on the commentator: he must not say that the subject is acquainted with the so-and-so unless the subject knows that the object of his acquaintance is the so-and-so. However, this is not a point about the nature of the subject's acquaintance with the object but only a point about the way in which another person ought to report it later in response to a certain question.

If we do not impose Russell's convention on the commentator, but allow him to say "He is acquainted with the so-and-so but he does not know that he is," it might perhaps be best to treat the second conjunct as the cancellation of a cancelable implication of the first.<sup>15</sup> However, I do not need to go into that, nor do I need to deal with the rather different case in which the subject himself has to answer the same question. Enough has been said to show that the two passages do not imply that Russell thought that acquaintance is ever intrinsically intensional.

### III

In the first two chapters that Russell never published, he argues that we are acquainted with predicates and relations as well as with particulars.<sup>16</sup> He had argued for the same conclusion in *The Problems of Philosophy*.<sup>17</sup> There is, however, an interesting difference in the way in which he now treats this topic. He is very concerned to specify the precise object of acquaintance when a relation is involved. This is because some dyadic relations are asymmetrical, and in such

cases acquaintance with the relation itself without understanding of the different properties of its two slots for particulars would not be enough. The same is true of certain relations with more than two terms.

The general character of the difficulty with which he was contending is clear. If acquaintance is extensional it will not include any knowledge of truths about its objects. But acquaintance with an asymmetrical relation will be insufficient to explain its contribution to the sense of a proposition in which its name occurs unless that acquaintance involves the knowledge that it may link the same particulars in two different ways and the ability to discriminate between them. Similarly, acquaintance with any universal ought to involve knowledge of its type and therefore of the types of particulars with which it may combine to produce complexes (and, as I shall argue later, the same is true of acquaintance with particulars).

In January 1913 Wittgenstein wrote to Russell announcing his discovery that general words signify forms rather than objects.<sup>18</sup> It seems that he did not maintain this thesis for long and Russell never adopted it. Later, in *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism*, Russell says that, when someone is acquainted with a predicate, e.g., the color red, he knows a form, but he does not elaborate this and he certainly does not go so far as to imply that the color is a form.<sup>19</sup>

In *Theory of Knowledge* he clearly distinguishes universals from forms, and, as we shall see in a moment, he claims that we need acquaintance with both before we can understand a proposition. For example, he claims that, in order to understand the proposition “*a* is before *b*,” we need (at least) acquaintance with the relation *precedes* and with the general form of dyadic relations. But did he think that acquaintance with this asymmetrical relation involves the knowledge that it may link the same particulars in two different ways and the ability to discriminate between them?

I cannot find a clear answer to this question in the text. He says that “sense” (sc., the sense of a relation) “is not in the relation alone, or in the complex alone, but in the relations of the particulars to the complex which constitute ‘position’ in the complex.”<sup>20</sup> It would seem that the difference between these two positions must be grasped by anyone who understands the word “before,” and so that knowledge of the difference would be included in acquaintance with this relation. However, Russell never says this. His next move is to suggest that the “word ‘sequence’ would be better than ‘before’ or ‘after’ as the name of the relation involved,”<sup>21</sup> and his conclusion is that we must be acquainted with the relation *sequence* itself; i.e., “that we have, in some cases, direct acquaintance with relations in the abstract signification which does not distinguish between the two senses of a relation.”<sup>22</sup>

So his solution to the problem posed by acquaintance with asymmetrical relations is unclear. Understanding the difference between the two slots in the relation *before* is not included in acquaintance with the universal, because the universal is *sequence*. Nor is it included in acquaintance with the form of dyadic relations,

which is entirely general. It therefore falls between two stools. This is not really surprising because the problem is part of a more general one, which extensional acquaintance is powerless to solve.

#### IV

My next task is to present the account of understanding propositions that Russell develops in *Theory of Knowledge*. It involves a dramatic extension of the scope of acquaintance, which now includes forms among its objects as well as particulars and universals. But first, the problem needs to be identified.

If acquaintance relates the subject to a single, fixed object, how can it explain his relation to the shifting basis in reality which may make a proposition true or may make it false? If the proposition is " $aRb$ ," it is obvious that understanding it does not require acquaintance with the complex *a-in-the-relation-R-to-b*. For the existence of this complex is sufficient to make the proposition true. So in 1910 Russell maintains that the only acquaintance needed by someone who understands the proposition is separate acquaintance with each of its elements,  $a$ ,  $R$ , and  $b$ .<sup>23</sup>

However, that leaves two things unexplained. The subject still has to combine these constituents in thought, and when he does this, how does he know that the combination is meant for the possibility that  $aRb$  and not for the possibility that each of its constituents exists separately? And how does he know that  $aRb$  really is a possibility? It would be natural to answer the first question by bringing in his intention and the second by bringing in his knowledge of the types of the three constituents. But let us see how Russell answers them.

In 1910 he had assumed that the relation *judging*, which holds between the subject and all three constituents, secures both the desired results. However, that is little more than a solution by fiat. It does not even explain the difference discussed in the preceding section, between the two different ways in which an asymmetrical relation might be judged to relate the same particulars, still less the general difference between combining the constituents in thought and thinking of them one by one.

Let us begin with the question "What makes it possible to combine the three constituents in thought in a way that makes sense?" Russell's suggestion is that this is possible only for someone already acquainted with the general form of dyadic relational propositions,  $x \xi y$ .<sup>24</sup> He pictures this form as a kind of stencil with holes for any three suitable constituents. It is essential to his explanation that the subject already be acquainted with this form. He must have advance knowledge of it, knowledge that supports his understanding of logic.

This idea is best put in Russell's own words: "Every logical notion, in an important sense, is or involves a *summmum genus*, and results from a process of generalization which has been carried to its utmost limit."<sup>25</sup> "Take, for example, the proposition 'Socrates precedes Plato.' This has the form of a dual complex: we may naturally symbolize the form by ' $xRy$ ' [better ' $x \xi y$ '],<sup>26</sup> where we use

a different sort of letter for the relation, because the difference between a relation and its terms is a *logical* difference. When we have reached the form 'xRy,' we have reached the utmost generalization that is possible starting from 'Socrates precedes Plato.'<sup>27</sup> "It is clear that we have acquaintance (possibly in an extended sense of the word 'acquaintance') with something as abstract as the pure form, since otherwise we could not intelligibly use such a word as 'relation.'<sup>28</sup> He goes further: "I think it may be shown that acquaintance with logical form is involved before explicit thought about logic begins, in fact as soon as we can understand a sentence. Let us suppose that we are acquainted with Socrates and with Plato and with the relation 'precedes,' but not with the complex 'Socrates precedes Plato.' Suppose now that someone tells us that Socrates precedes Plato. How do we know what he means? It is plain that his statement does not give us *acquaintance* with the complex 'Socrates precedes Plato.' What we understand is that Socrates and Plato and 'precedes' are united in a complex of the form 'xRy,' where Socrates has the *x*-place and Plato has the *y*-place. It is difficult to see how we could possibly understand how Socrates and Plato and 'precedes' are to be combined unless we had acquaintance with the form of the complex."<sup>29</sup> In general he holds that "there certainly is such a thing as 'logical experience,' by which I mean that kind of immediate knowledge, other than judgment, which is what enables us to understand logical terms."<sup>30</sup>

It might be thought that these passages do not make it absolutely clear that people who understand the proposition "Socrates precedes Plato" must be acquainted with the form in advance, just as many of Russell's remarks about their relation to the universal constituents of their propositions do not make it absolutely clear that it too must be advance acquaintance. This is because he often supposes that the people in question are being confronted with perceived complexes and are naming simple sense-data, and in such a situation the necessary acquaintance with the particular constituents of their propositions can only be achieved on the spot. However, since the propositions are contingent, the necessary acquaintance with the relation cannot be achieved on the spot even in perceptual situations.<sup>31</sup>

Now the form, like the relation, is general, and so it is at least possible for the necessary acquaintance with it too to be achieved before the subject finds himself in the perceptual situation. Moreover, even when he is in it, he will need advance acquaintance with the form, because what he judges is that it is contingently true at least that these two particulars stand in some dual relation to one another. This necessity is even clearer when the subject understands the proposition before he gets into the perceptual situation. So in all cases of understanding contingent propositions the subject needs advance acquaintance with the form.

In fact, this is the natural way to interpret many of Russell's remarks on this topic. He says: "In order to understand 'A and B are similar,' we must know what is supposed to be done with A and B and similarity; *i. e.* what it is for two terms to have a relation; that is, we must understand the form of the complex which

must exist if the proposition is true,"<sup>32</sup> and "we must . . . regard the understanding of 'something has some relation to something' as logically preceding the understanding of any particular proposition asserting a particular case of dual relation."<sup>33</sup>

The next thing that Russell has to explain is how anyone achieves advance acquaintance with such a form. There is a risk of a vicious infinite regress here, because it is not easy to avoid the suggestion that he achieves the acquaintance when he establishes the truth of another proposition of the same form, and yet it is obvious that that proposition, in its turn, would first have to be understood by him. But let us see how Russell proceeds.

He identifies the form  $x \xi y$  with the fact that something has some relation to something. He writes: "We require of the form that there shall be one form, and only one, for every group of complexes which 'have the same form'; also, if possible, it would be convenient to take as the form something which is not a mere incomplete symbol. We may secure these *desiderata* by taking as the one form the fact that there are entities that make up complexes having the form in question. . . . For example, the form of all subject-predicate complexes will be the fact 'something has some predicate'; the form of all dual complexes will be 'something has some relation to something.'" This fact, he goes on to explain, "contains no constituent at all. It is, therefore, suitable to serve as the 'form' of dual complexes. In a sense, it is simple, since it cannot be analyzed. At first sight, it seems to have a structure, and therefore to be not simple; but it is more correct to say that it is a structure."<sup>34</sup>

At this point Russell has to face two questions. Are these entirely general facts contingent? And if they are, how does the subject establish them?

It is clear that, if they are contingent facts, Russell's explanation of understanding the sense of a proposition will slide into an infinite regress. For the only way to establish the fact that something has some relation to something would be to verify another singular proposition of that form, and before that could be done, it would be necessary to understand the sense of that proposition, and so on ad infinitum.

When Wittgenstein read Russell's manuscript, he took him to mean, or at least to be committed to the view, that the general facts are contingent. For in a passage in the *Tractatus*,<sup>35</sup> evidently intended as a criticism of Russell because it echoes his words, he writes:

The "experience" that we need in order to understand logic is not that something or other is the state of things, but that something *is*: that, however, is *not* an experience.

If Russell replied that the general facts were not contingent, Wittgenstein had a ready answer in the *Tractatus*:



The mark of a logical proposition is *not* general validity. To be general means no more than to be accidentally valid for all things. An ungeneralized proposition can be tautological just as well as a generalized one.<sup>36</sup>

This could be directed not only against the thesis that true negative existential propositions are necessary but also against the extension of the thesis to true positive existential propositions.

It is even possible to conjecture more details of the criticisms of Russell's manuscript made by Wittgenstein in May 1913. For when Russell described the meeting to Ottoline Morrell, he said that Wittgenstein claimed to have tried his theory and to have found that it did not work,<sup>37</sup> and there is a passage in *Notebooks 1914-16* that almost certainly alludes to this failed attempt:

I thought that the possibility of the truth of the proposition  $\phi a$  was tied up with the fact  $(\exists x, \phi). \phi x$ . But it is impossible to see why  $\phi a$  should only be possible if there is another proposition of the same form.  $\phi a$  surely does not need any precedent. (For suppose that there existed only the two elementary propositions, " $\phi a$ " and " $\psi a$ " and that " $\phi a$ " were false: why should this proposition only make sense if " $\psi a$ " is true?)<sup>38</sup>

However, Russell had another card to play. In *Theory of Knowledge* he says that the entirely general facts, with which he identifies the forms of propositions, are facts of a very special kind. He does not actually say that the corresponding propositions are self-evident, but he describes them in a way that implies that they are. "The importance of the understanding of pure form lies in its relation to the self-evidence of logical truth. For since understanding is here a direct relation of the subject to a single object the possibility of untruth does not exist, as it does when understanding is a multiple relation."<sup>39</sup>

If Russell's entirely general propositions are self-evident, the facts to which they correspond may not be contingent facts, and if they are not contingent facts there will be no need to verify singular propositions of the same form. In that case Wittgenstein's criticism will miss the mark. However, Russell's claim to detect self-evidence here is not reassuring, because he also makes the same claim about basic contingent propositions.<sup>40</sup> Wittgenstein, of course, believed that logic cannot be and does not need to be founded on self-evidence:

Self-evidence, which Russell talked about so much, can become dispensable in logic, only because language itself prevents every logical mistake. What makes logic *a priori* is the impossibility of illogical thought.<sup>41</sup>

But if we want to understand why Russell thought that his entirely general propositions are self-evident, and what he took that to indicate about the nature of the facts to which they correspond, we need to look at his reasoning.

One of his arguments for the self-evidence of entirely general propositions is

the traditional argument that in their case the transition from understanding to apprehension of truth is immediate. "In considering the understanding of propositions, a specially interesting case is afforded by the propositions of pure logic, which have no constituents: in their case understanding is a dual relation, the object-term having a pure form. This fact seems to be connected with the self-evidence of logical propositions."<sup>42</sup> "I do not think there is any difference between understanding and acquaintance in the case of 'something has some relation to something.' I base this view simply on the fact that I am unable introspectively to discover any difference. In regard to most propositions—*i. e.* to all such as contain any constants—it is easy to *prove* that understanding is different from acquaintance with the corresponding fact (if any): Understanding is neutral as regards truth and falsehood, whereas acquaintance with the fact is only possible when there is such a fact, *i. e.* in the case of truth; and understanding of any proposition other than a pure form cannot be, like acquaintance, a two-term relation. But both these proofs fail in the case of a pure form, and we are therefore compelled to rely on direct inspection, which, so far as I can discover, reveals no difference in this case between understanding and acquaintance."<sup>43</sup>

Introspection does not provide very strong support for the thesis that the transition from understanding to apprehension of truth is immediate in this case. However, there is an independent argument embedded in the end of this passage and set out more fully in three other passages that have already been quoted.<sup>44</sup> The argument is that entirely general propositions are simple, because they contain no constituents, and so understanding is in this case alone "a direct relation of the subject to a simple object," *viz.*, the relation *acquaintance*.

However, at this point Russell really does face an unanswerable objection. He is trying to prove that entirely general propositions are self-evident. His conclusion is that their truth is apprehended as soon as they are understood. But when he tries to establish this conclusion by arguing that they are really simple objects of acquaintance, because they contain no constituents, he spoils his case by making their truth unintelligible. If they are simple, their truth is as unintelligible as their falsehood. Wittgenstein was surely right in thinking that the elimination of constituents does not make a proposition simple.

A fully generalized proposition, like every other proposition, is composite. (This is shown by the fact that in " $(\exists x, \phi). \phi x$ " we have to mention " $\phi$ " and " $x$ " separately. They both, independently, stand in signifying relations to the world, just as in the case of ungeneralized propositions.<sup>45</sup>

It is a conjecture that Wittgenstein made all these points in his conversation with Russell in May 1913. Possibly he thought of some of them later. But if we now turn to the second thing that Russell's theory was designed to explain, the subject's knowledge that  $aRb$  really is a possibility, we have independent evidence

that an objection to this part of the theory was among the criticisms made by Wittgenstein at that meeting.

Wittgenstein wrote to Russell in June 1913:

I can now express my objection to your theory of judgement exactly; I believe it is obvious that from the proposition "A judges that (say)  $a$  is in relation  $R$  to  $b$ ," if correctly analyzed, the proposition " $aRb \vee \neg aRb$ " must follow directly without the use of any other premise. This condition is not fulfilled by your theory.<sup>46</sup>

On July 27, 1913, evidently after receiving a reply from Russell, he wrote:

I am very sorry to hear that my objection to your theory of judgement paralyzes you. I think it can only be removed by a correct theory of propositions.<sup>47</sup>

Wittgenstein's point is that, if acquaintance with the constituents of a proposition is going to explain how the subject knows that he has put them together in a way that makes sense, then acquaintance must be intensional. For example, he must be acquainted with  $a$  and  $b$  as objects of the right kind to combine with  $R$  to produce  $aRb$ .

If I know an object, I know all its possible occurrences in states of affairs. Every one of these possibilities must be part of the nature of the object. A new possibility cannot be discovered later.<sup>48</sup>

When Wittgenstein's point is put like this, it is a point against Russell's 1910 theory of judgment, and of course it does make an impact on that theory. However, it is clear that Wittgenstein actually made the point against the 1913 theory, which required acquaintance with the form of dyadic relations as well as acquaintance with the three constituents. It follows that Wittgenstein must have argued that, even when Russell had brought in acquaintance with the form, he had not made any progress toward a solution of the problem. For it remained unexplained how the subject knows that these constituents can be combined within this form. In short, if the form is treated as an object of acquaintance, it recreates the problem that it was designed to solve. This is the point of origin of Wittgenstein's picture theory of propositions.

## V

My last topic is Russell's 1913 account of the apprehension of truths about sensed complexes. Since it does not contain any important additions to his earlier treatment of the subject,<sup>49</sup> I shall not describe it in great detail. My approach to it will be by way of the last topic, because I want to show how his failure to explain understanding the sense of propositions is connected with certain shortcomings in his explanation of the apprehension of perceptual truths.

It might be best to begin with a general description of the connection between

the two faults. In all his theories of propositions Russell experienced difficulty in accounting for the fact that they have senses. How do we ever get these heavier-than-air machines off the ground? Acquaintance with their constituents certainly will not do the trick, because it will not explain the fact that, when they are combined, the combination immediately levitates in the way that we call "being true or false." Russell gives a sensible psychological account of the way in which the subject combines the constituents in thought, and his remarks on this topic are very like Wittgenstein's.<sup>50</sup> However, when he addresses himself to the question of how the subject knows that what he thinks is a real possibility, he spoils the explanation of the takeoff. For he introduces an entirely general proposition and immediately uses an acquaintance line to attach it to a single fixed point in the world, and that frustrates the enterprise.

The shortcomings of his account of the apprehension of truths about sensed complexes are similar, but they affect the point of arrival of the proposition rather than its point of departure. When the complex *a-in-the-relation-R-to-b* is presented to the subject and he judges that *aRb*, his understanding of the sense of this proposition must not be wholly derived from these two particulars and this instantiation of the relation. It must come, at least in part, from elsewhere. Otherwise, the proposition, in his understanding of it, will not be contingent. However, Russell's account does not include this requirement. He describes the situation in a way that does not allow the subject to make a sufficiently sharp distinction between the asserted combination of constituents and their actual combination, and so prevents him from watching the proposition land on or off target.

Let us take a brief look at some of the details. The subject senses and is therefore acquainted with the complex *a-in-the-relation-R-to-b*, and the question is how he arrives at the true judgment that *aRb*. Russell says that he must attend to the complex and analyze it in thought into its three constituents. This will give him acquaintance with the three constituents, if he did not already possess it. He then judges that this complex, sensed as a whole, is identical with the complex consisting of these three constituents.<sup>51</sup>

There are some differences between this account and Russell's earlier accounts<sup>52</sup> of the transition from acquaintance with a complex to a true judgment about it. One difference is that in his earlier accounts the doctrine of acquaintance with facts was used to make the transition look more foolproof than it is in reality,<sup>53</sup> and there is an interesting similarity between his treatment of acquaintance with the particular fact that *aRb* and his treatment of acquaintance with the entirely general fact that  $x \xi y$ , which is a form. Another difference is that in his earlier accounts Russell claimed that, if the subject confines his attention to the sensed complex and does not base his judgment on anything outside it, his judgment must be true, but he does not repeat that claim now. Perhaps he does not want to make acquaintance with the particular complex *aRb* too like acquaintance with the general form  $x \xi y$ .

However, the new account of the transition from acquaintance to judgment follows the same general lines as his earlier account, and it is flawed in the same fundamental way. When Russell construes the judgment that  $aRb$  as the identity-judgment, that this complex perceived as a whole is identical with the complex consisting of these three constituents, he makes it appear that the subject only has to make two simultaneous deictic references to the complex, one with a phrase not reflecting its composition. It then seems that he does not run any risk of falsehood in his judgment. However, this is an illusion produced by packing all the risks of falsehood into the referential phrase reflecting the composition of the complex. If he knows that the complex is really composed of the three constituents, and if he knows that the relation really is  $R$ , these pieces of knowledge must have come, at least in part, from points outside the complex. To put the criticism the other way, the sense of the proposition, as he understands it, must not be wholly derived from the composition of this complex and this instantiation of the relation.

### Notes

1. *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell*, vol. 7, ed. Elizabeth Eames in collaboration with Kenneth Blackwell (London: Allen & Unwin, 1984).
2. "The Relation between Wittgenstein's Picture Theory of Propositions and Russell's Theories of Judgement," *Philosophical Review* (April 1977), pp. 177-96.
3. In *Logic and Knowledge*, ed. R. C. Marsh (London: Allen & Unwin, 1956), pp. 127-74.
4. See R. W. Clark, *The Life of Bertrand Russell* (London: Jonathan Cape and Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1975), pp. 204-5.
5. Brian McGuinness, "The Grundgedanke of the *Tractatus*," in *Understanding Wittgenstein*. Royal Institute of Philosophy Lectures, vol. VII (1974), pp. 32-55.
6. See his letter to Russell dated January 16, 1913 in *Notebooks 1914-16*, ed. G. H. von Wright and G. E. M. Anscombe, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1961), p. 120. See also *Notes on Logic*, *Ibid.*, p. 98.
7. *Notebooks 1914-16*, p. 121.
8. *Notebooks 1914-16*, entry for October 21, 1914, paragraph 4.
9. See my article in *Philosophical Review*, cited in note 2.
10. See "The Philosophy of Logical Atomism," in *Logic and Knowledge*, ed. Marsh, p. 205, discussed in section III.
11. See "On Propositions," in *Logic and Knowledge*, ed. Marsh, pp. 305-6.
12. *Theory of Knowledge* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1984), p. 100.
13. See *The Problems of Philosophy*, p. 46, and "On the Nature of Acquaintance," in *Logic and Knowledge*, pp. 127, 130, and 168.
14. *The Problems of Philosophy*, p. 53, and "Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description," in *Mysticism and Logic* (London: Longmans, 1918), pp. 214-15.
15. See H. P. Grice, "The Causal Theory of Perception," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, supp., 35 (1961).
16. *Theory of Knowledge*, part I, Chapters 7 and 8.
17. Ch. 10.
18. See note 6, this chapter.
19. See note 10, this chapter.
20. *Theory of Knowledge*, p. 88.
21. *Ibid.*
22. *Ibid.* p. 89.
23. "On the Nature of Truth and Falsehood" (1910), in *Philosophical Essays* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1968), pp. 147-59.

24. He says that the form is  $xRy$ , but it is necessary to indicate that the second term is a variable like the first and the third. See *Theory of Knowledge*, pp. 98–99.
25. *Theory of Knowledge*, p. 97.
26. See note 24, this chapter.
27. *Theory of Knowledge*, p. 98.
28. *Ibid.*, pp. 98–99.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 99.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 97.
31. See section I of this essay.
32. *Theory of Knowledge*, p. 116.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 130.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 114.
35. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. D. F. Pears and B. F. Mc Guinness (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961), 5.552.
36. *Ibid.*, 6.1231. Cf. *Notebooks 1914–16*, entries for October 14–29, 1914. In most of the entries on these days Wittgenstein is struggling with the problem of completely general propositions and there are many echoes of Russell's ideas in *Theory of Knowledge*, which in the end he rejects.
37. Clark, *Life of Bertrand Russell*, pp. 204–5.
38. *Notebooks 1914–16*, October 21, 1914, last entry.
39. *Theory of Knowledge*, p. 132.
40. See *The Problems of Philosophy*, pp. 113–15.
41. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 5.552.
42. *Theory of Knowledge*, p. 177.
43. *Ibid.*, pp. 130–31.
44. *Ibid.*, pp. 114, 132, 177.
45. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 5.5261. Cf. 4.0411.
46. See *Notebooks 1914–16*, p. 121.
47. *Ibid.*
48. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 2.0123. Cf. *Notebooks 1914–16*, November 4, 1914, last entry.
49. *Principia Mathematica*, vol. I, chapter 2, p. 43 (1910 edition), and *The Problems of Philosophy*, pp. 136–38.
50. *Theory of Knowledge*, p. 116. Cf. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 4.031.
51. *Theory of Knowledge*, pp. 124–28.
52. See note 49, this chapter.
53. See my "The Function of Acquaintance in Russell's Philosophy," *Synthèse*, 46 (1981), pp. 149–66.